

Minutes – Plan NH Meeting at Odd Fellows Lodge, January 21, 2016

The meeting started at 7pm with a brief introduction by Robert Allen. Vic Reno followed, saying we need to look at what we can easily do with little money along with what will take a major effort like a store, and or gas depot. He suggested sharing the booklet we had received from Plan NH as widely as possible. Also suggested using social media. The meeting was to begin working on the ideas that were noted in the plan and moving forward, maybe dividing into groups. He also introduced Joe Marks who was instrumental at starting the Monadnock Cooperative and was present at the meeting to share his experience.

Joe Marks explained that a cooperative is a legal sub form of a for profit corporation owned by its members. He felt the cooperative model was difficult for a small town. The Monadnock Cooperative in Keene is looking into seeing if they can support small communities. Generally for a cooperative to be successful you need to make one and a half million a year. The core problem for a cooperative is that it is hard to survive. A cooperative creates buy in and equity but still has to be a functioning business. Robert Allen asked what the biggest challenge would be, Joe replied operating margins. He mentioned that Acworth buys goods from retail stores. Misha Golfman suggested Black River as a potential supplier.

Dave Vesco asked how the Marlow Alliance fits in with the Charrette. Jessica Mack explained that over the last 2 years they have looked at many options and come to the conclusion that the cooperative option is the only one that might work. They had approached gas companies but there was not enough traffic to support them. They do have other cooperatives willing to work with them, are looking at grants, have done a feasibility study and have verbal commitments from some gas stations that are willing to offer financing in the form of installing pumps and financing over 10 years. The Marlow Alliance is a C corporation. Joe Marks offered to look at the data they had and give an opinion on whether the store could make a profit. Jessica said that the Marlow Alliance felt gas was an immediate need and after one year they could make enough equity to put in a store or café or both. It was clarified that the Marlow Alliance and the group present were one group moving forward, though different groups would be taking on different recommendations and meeting separately at times.

Robert Allen mentioned that the Marlow Alliance had approached the Selectmen with a warrant article for the upcoming Town Meeting asking the Town to authorize the Selectmen to donate town owned land for the store and gas depot. The problem the Selectmen have is that the land the Marlow Alliance want donated has been earmarked for a public safety building. Joe Marks suggested leasing one of the suggested properties.

Misha Golfman suggested we looked into building an environmentally friendly community store with the resources we have in Town and take advantage of alternative energy sources like solar energy.

Suggestions were made that we should try and have everything all in the same place including the municipal buildings and recycling station, we should also make sure we are not missing resources. Joe Marks said he would be happy to approach Pat Gallup and David Hall and Vic Reno mentioned that Jack Duggan was interested in helping. Marlow could be an example for other similar communities faces the same problems that we are. Vic also mentioned working with the Selectmen to look at properties and open up a dialogue through Tracy Messer with Pat Gallup.

Vic Reno and Bob Allen pointed out that Plan NH had made other recommendations, though they recognise that the store and gas station were the top of the list. Some of the recommendations included a kiosk with local information. Misha Golfman volunteered that Kroka could build this as it

fits in with their high school curriculum plus they are currently working with a software that would be useful for mapping trails. Vic Reno mentioned he could probably get Benson to donate timber.

Parking is another area to be looked at.

Other recommendations included High Speed internet and a Health Care centre and pursuing further LChip funding for Jones Hall to make it more accessible to the community.

The meeting concluded with setting the date for the next meeting as a whole group. This meeting will be on February 25 prior to the Marlow Alliance's meeting on February 27. It was also anticipated that smaller groups would be formed to tackle individual recommendations and these would meet separately. It was agreed to put out a summary of the meeting and ask people what areas they would be interested in working on. We also needed to move from calling ourselves Plan NH to something that is now more relevant to Marlow.

It was recommended that a warrant article was included at Town Meeting to include a core group to be responsible for moving this plan forward and to be the point of contact for all smaller groups working on individual recommendations.